

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA  
BRUNSWICK DIVISION

FILED  
U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
BRUNSWICK DIV.  
2010 DEC 17 PM 2:00  
CLERK R. Oak  
SO. DIST. OF GA.

CHRISTOPHER LEE BAKER,

Plaintiff,

v.

JOSE GUZMAN, Public Defender,

Defendant.

CIVIL ACTION NO.: CV210-158

**MAGISTRATE JUDGE'S REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Plaintiff, an inmate currently confined at the Camden County Jail in Woodbine, Georgia, filed an action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983. A prisoner proceeding in a civil action against officers or employees of government entities must comply with the mandates of the Prison Litigation Reform Act ("PLRA"), 28 U.S.C. §§ 1915 & 1915A. In determining compliance, the court shall be guided by the longstanding principle that *pro se* pleadings are entitled to liberal construction. Haines v. Kerner, 404 U.S. 519, 520; Walker v. Dugger, 860 F.2d 1010, 1011 (11th Cir. 1988).

28 U.S.C. § 1915A requires a district court to screen the complaint for cognizable claims before or as soon as possible after docketing. The court must dismiss the complaint or any portion of the complaint that is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary damages from a defendant who is immune from such relief. 28 U.S.C. § 1915A(b)(1) and (2).

In Mitchell v. Farcass, 112 F.3d 1483, 1490 (11th Cir. 1997), the Eleventh Circuit interpreted the language contained in 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii), which is nearly

identical to that contained in the screening provisions at § 1915A(b). As the language of § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) closely tracks the language of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6), the court held that the same standards for determining whether to dismiss for failure to state a claim under Rule 12(b)(6) should be applied to prisoner complaints filed pursuant to § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii). Mitchell, 112 F.3d at 1490. The Court may dismiss a complaint for failure to state a claim only where it appears beyond a doubt that a *pro se* litigant can prove no set of facts that would entitle him to relief. Hughes v. Rowe, 449 U.S. 5, 10; Mitchell, 112 F.3d at 1490. While the court in Mitchell interpreted § 1915(e), its interpretation guides this Court in applying the identical language of § 1915A.

Plaintiff alleges that Jose Guzman—his appointed public defender—does not visit him, wants Plaintiff to take a plea, waived Plaintiff's arraignment without his consent, will not file motions for Plaintiff, and has not tried to get Plaintiff a bond reduction.

"In order to prevail on a civil rights action under § 1983, a plaintiff must show that he or she was deprived of a federal right by a person acting under color of state law." Griffin v. City of Opa-Locka, 261 F.3d 1295, 1303 (11th Cir. 2001). "[S]tate action requires *both* an alleged constitutional deprivation 'caused by the exercise of some right or privilege created by the State or by the rule of conduct imposed by the State or by a person for whom the State is responsible,' *and* that 'the party charged with the deprivation must be a person who may fairly be said to be a state actor.'" Patrick v. Floyd Med. Ctr., 201 F.3d 1313, 1315 (11th Cir. 2000) (emphasis in original) (citation omitted). "[A] public defender does not act under color of state law when performing a

lawyer's traditional functions as counsel to a defendant in a criminal proceeding." Polk County v. Dodson, 454 U.S. 312, 325 (1981). As Defendant Guzman did not act under color of state law at any time, Plaintiff cannot sustain a 42 U.S.C. § 1983 cause of action against him.

### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the foregoing, it is my **RECOMMENDATION** that Plaintiff's Complaint be **DISMISSED** for failure to state a cognizable claim under § 1983.

**SO REPORTED** and **RECOMMENDED**, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2010.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
JAMES E. GRAHAM  
UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE